



Dear School Leader,

Today, one in 13 children has food allergies, or roughly two in every classroom. Nearly 40 percent of these children have already experienced a severe or life-threatening allergic reaction.

In response to this emerging epidemic, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in 2013 published national guidelines for managing food allergies designed to help schools avoid, recognize and treat allergic reactions while ensuring that students with food allergies are safely included in school activities.

Important highlights from the guidelines include:

1. Food allergies may constitute a *disability* under the law. This is important because schools cannot exclude children with food allergies from activities (e.g., birthday celebrations, classroom parties) *because* of their food allergies.
2. The emotional toll of exclusion, bullying, stigma and fear can cause significant emotional distress. It is important to consider the physical *and* emotional toll on children with food allergies.
3. Every child at risk for anaphylaxis should have an individual written accommodation plan. In public schools, this plan will often be a Section 504 plan. In private schools, a similar written plan will serve the same purpose.
4. A child's accommodations plan (504 plan or other written plan) has two parts:
 - a. The accommodations or services needed for the child to be safely included in school activities.
 - b. The emergency care plan that explains how to treat an allergic reaction.
5. The *Recommended Practices for Reducing the Risk of Exposure* (pages 41-43) include specific recommendations for accommodating food allergic students in the classroom, cafeteria, field trips, extracurricular activities and beyond.

A few examples of accommodations for food allergic students include:

- Avoid the use of identified allergens in class projects, parties, holidays and celebrations, arts, crafts, science experiments, rewards, cooking and snacks.
- Have immediate access to epinephrine auto-injectors (e.g., EpiPen, Auvi-Q).
- Train teachers, bus drivers, and other school staff to recognize and treat allergic reactions and anaphylaxis, a life-threatening allergic reaction.

Students with food allergies develop a sense of security when accommodations such as these are put into place to ensure their physical *and* emotional well-being. For more information, please visit www.foodallergy.org/CDC.

Sincerely,

Michael Spigler
Vice President of Education